Panel to Probe CIA Role in Chile

By Laurence Stern
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Stung by recent revelations of covert U.S. political intervention in Chile, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee voted unanimously yesterday to investigate the matter.

The action was taken in a climate of rising pressure on Capitol Hill for tighter congressional control over operations of the Central Intelligence Agency.

The committee's inquiry will go into the question of whether high-ranking administration officials may have perjured themselves or committed contempt of Congress in sworn testimony on the U.S. clandestine role in opposing the election of the late Salvador Allende in Chile and then seeking to undermine his government.

Rep. Thomas Morgan (D-Pa.), Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, said he would take up the Chile issue this week with the observation that "this is our one chance to get oversight of the CIA and we're going to grab it."

Traditionally the CIA has reported to oversight subcommittees comprised of the House and Senate Armed Services committees. Members of both oversight panels have said in the past week that they were unaware of the scope and details of the interventions, going back over an 11-year period and costing some $11 million, until the recent surfacing of testimony by CIA Director William E. Colby.

The clandestine programs in Chile, as covered in the Colby testimony, ran from the period of the Kennedy administration —starting in 1962—to August of last year. A total of $1 million was authorized for destabilization of the Allende government during August, 1973. This was a month before the military coup that toppled the Allende government and led to the death of the Chilean president.

At a closed session of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee yesterday, Minority Leader Hugh Scott (R-Pa.) expressed concern over the leakage of a staff report recommending contempt and perjury investigations of government witnesses, according to informed sources.

A copy of the report, prepared by Jerome Levinson, chief counsel to the Foreign Relations Subcommittee on Multinational Corporations, was obtained by The Washington Post from a Senate office to which it had been distributed.

Sen. Frank Church (D-Idaho), chairman of the multinational subcommittee, said that the Levinson report has been set aside but that the full committee investigation will go into its findings and recommendations.

Meanwhile, spokesman for the White House and State Department still were unable to elaborate on the basis for President Ford's assertion at his Monday night press conference that the Allende government three or four years ago sought to destroy opposition parties, newspapers and electronic media.

At a White House briefing, acting press secretary John W. Hushen said he stood on the President's statement and that anything further would have to come from the State Department.

WILLIAM E. COLBY
. . . testimony causes stir

SEN. FRANK CHURCH
. . . will air charges

SALVADOR ALLENDE
. . . target of efforts

At the State Department, spokesman Robert Anderson told reporters that President Ford's statement "speaks for itself" and that he had nothing to add. At the CIA there was no comment on the presidential allegation.

One State Department public affairs officer lunched yesterday with a member of the Chilean embassy staff, Chilean right wing Radical Party journalist Rafael Otera, in an effort to gather evidence to support the President's charge against the Allende government.

White House officials declined to discuss what sort of briefing was provided the President as the basis for his charge of an effort by the Allende government to destroy opposition press and parties. It was this charge upon which Mr. Ford based his justification of the U.S. covert actions targeted against Allende.

Sen. Walter F. Mondale (D-Minn.), in a floor speech yesterday, said he found the President's statement on the CIA's role in Chile "unbelievable" and announced he is introducing legislation that would establish a Senate select committee to recommend reforms in control of foreign intelligence operations.

"If we are so concerned about the existence of opposition elements and the preservation of democracy in Chile, do we now have a program to help support the democratic politicians and journalists who have now been muzzled, banned and jailed?" Mondale inquired.

In addition to the Mondale statement, Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield (D-Mont.) said he intends to call for a joint committee to oversee covert CIA operations abroad.

"We have not asked enough questions, we have been too prone to take what they tell us on faith and not probe too deeply," Mansfield said. His proposal was endorsed by Senate Foreign Relations Committee chairman J. William Fulbright (D-Ark.), who will preside over the investigation of the special programs in Chile.

Rep. John Anderson (R-Ill.), chairman of the House Republican Conference, was one of the few congressional Republicans to criticize openly President Ford's defense of covert operations in Chile against the Allende government.

"I am surprised by President Ford's defense of covert operations," said Anderson. He predicted an outcry against it in Congress and said he did not know why the President assumed responsibility for activities undertaken by the Nixon administration.

Sen. Hubert Humphrey (D-Minn.), in a television interview, called for the termination of covert action.